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ABSTRACT

This description of the research, the development of state laws, and the origins of practices attempting to restore safe schools suggests that there was a relationship among research, policy, and practice. The Congress of the United States enacted the Safe School Study Act in 1974 to ensure a safe environment for education. In response to this legislatuion the National Institute of Education (NIE) in 1978 designed a study to acquire information on the current status of safety in public schools. In 1983, another study was undertaken by the Boston (Massachusetts) Safe Schools Commission to ascertain violence, victimization, and discipline in Boston high schools, and in 1984 the U.S. Department of Justice collaborated with the U.S. Department of Education and Pepperdine University to sponsor the National School Safety Center, which develops educational programs to promote safe schools. This reivew indicates that there is a connection between practice and research. At present California is the forerunner in establishing victims' rights and mandating principals to report all misdemeanors and felonies that occur on the campuses. The review found that small class size, a perceived fair discipline practice, a visible principal, participatory decision-making including teachers and students, and a cohesiveness among teaching staff and principal all related to less violence and vandalism. (LMS)

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AVENUE TO SAFE SCHOOLS: RESEARCH, POLICY AND PRACTICE

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Introduction

Public education in America was instituted as a means to provide common knowledge to its citizens. Though education was not mentioned in the Bill of Rights, during the intervening years since 1789, the right to a basic education has become an acknowledged right of all American citizens. States provide for up to thirteen years of publicly funded education, which includes compulsory school attendence for children (National School Safety Center, 1987). Because states mandate compulsory attendence by youth, the right to learn in a safe environment should be provided Without a safe environment, educators assert that students cannot focus their attention on acquiring the knowledge to be a citizen in a democracy (Rapp, 1986).

Concern by educators and changing public attitudes about school safety issues has come to the attention of legislators. Believing in the right to safe schools, the Ninety-third Congress of the United States in 1974 passed the Safe School Study Act. As a response to this legislation, the National Institute of Education (NIE) designed a three-part study to acquire information on the current status of safety in public schools in America (NIE, 1978, p.1).

Research

Phase I of the NIE study was a survey of 4000 elementary and secondary school principals For a month period, they were asked to

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make daily reports on the incidence of illegal or disruptive activities Principals were assigned varying months of the nine-month school year.

During Phase II of the study, 642 public junior and senior high school principals were surveyed by on-site field representatives. The schools were selected from the larger sample of Phase I of the study based upon representativeness of school size and demographic area--urban, suburban, and rural. Additional information was collected in this part of the study such as data about the surrounding community, activities of the principal/school staff and student perceptions of their school.

Phase III of the study was a series of case studies of schools which had changed from a large incidence of crime and violence in the school to a safer school environment or those which continued to have serious problems with crime and violence.

Violent Schools-Safe Schools:The Safe School Study Report to the Congress (NIE, 1978, Vol. 1) indicated the following:

Community Factors

- Schools that reside within a high crime community report more violence and vandalism.

Student Factors

- Students in junior high schools are more likely to report victimization than older students. Apparently younger students are victimized by older students.

School Factors

- Larger schools report a greater percentage of violence and vandalism.
- Schools that place a higher importance is placed on grades report more vandalism.
- Intense stress among students for leadership increases vandalism.
- Schools with clear rules of conduct enforced by the principal report less violence and vandalism.

- Schools with students that report fair discipline practices report less violence and vandalism.
- Small class size relates to less violence and vandalism.
- Schools where students indicate the relevance of school to their lives report less violence and vandalism.
- Schools where students mention that they are in control of their lives report less violence and vandalism.
- A principal who appears to be ineffective or invisible to students reports more violence and vandalism in that school.
- Schools with principals that provide opportunities for the teachers and students to be participatory members of decision-making report less violence and vandalism.
- Cohesiveness among teaching staff and principal relate to less violence and vandalism.

Legal

• Principals do not report to police many incidents of crime and violence. Major crimes are reported but often principals preferred to handle what appears to them as manageable crimes.

Another study was undertaken by Boston to ascertain violence, victimization and discipline in Boston high schools (Fox, 1983). This was a more intense and local study than the 1978 NIE study.

Researchers held personal 20-30 minute interviews with a stratified sample of 495 students out of a student population of 4088. The researchers were openly aware of the limitations of their methodology and sources of response error in such a survey. However, the interviewers from Northeastern University reported openness by most of the respondents since no names were collected as part of the study.

The findings of these interviews indicated that 38 percent of students had been a victim of robbery, assault or larceny. Younger students tended to be more frequently or more seriously victimized. Whites were more likely to be the victims but Asian minorities reported that all other ethnic groups victimized them. Being fearful "on occasion" within the school was mentioned by 28 percent of students and 36 percent indicated they avoided places at school due to personal safety.

Lavatories seemed to be the most dangerous location as reported by students. Weapons appeared to be common in school as 28 percent reported that they had carried a weapon at one or more times to school; and more than 50 percent indicated that weapons were regularly carried by some of the students. Victimization was reported to school authorities by 65 percent of students, but 30 percent revealed that they would or did not report incidents because nothing would happen.

A second part of the study included a mailed survey to 874 Boston teachers, of whom 55 percent responded after two mailings and follow-up telephone calls (Louis, 1983). Of those responding 50 percent reported that they had been victimized on school property at least once during the past year. Moreover, 11.6 percent were victimized five or more times. Theft and vandalism were the most often reported types of victimization. Physical attack was reported by 11 percent of the respondents and 3 percent indicated they had to have attention of a physician following the attack. Robbery was reported by 4 percent of the teachers.

The picture of a common vicitimization of a Boston teacher is that the theft occurs in the classroom and the perpetrator, usually a single individual, is unknown but suspected to be a student, not an outsider. The teacher tended not to report the victimization but those who were repeatedly victimized indicated that they began to file reports to the principal. The Boston study indicated 32 percent of the students were victimized in the neighborhood. Harassment or intimidation constituted the most frequent type of victimization. There were no reports of rape or murder.

The Safe School Study Report to the Congress was published in January 1978 and reported at American Educational Research Association that spring. Interest in the findings appeared limited by educators and researchers. This author was one among a handful of listeners at the session.

Policy and Practice

However, the results of the study were used by persons in the fields of law and justice (Garrison, 1987). The National School Resource Network was funded in 1980 by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and a seven-part field-based curriculum was created. The curriculum included training manuals for about 10 hours of training in such areas as school climate, community networking, security and enironmental planning (McCain, 1987). This curriculum was based on the findings of Safe School

Study and presented to Justice Department personnel and to groups of educators. The intent was to bring the concerns of those working in juvenile delinquency to the attention of school personnel.

In 1980 in response to the findings of these two studies, the State of California's Department of Justice, under the leadership of then-State Attorney General Deukmejian, expressed concern about the safety in schools and subsequently created the California School Safety Center with headquarters in Sacramento (NSSC, 1985). The major activities of that center included the development of crime prevention programs for elementary and secondary schools, technical assistance, and a public awareness and education program. TheState Attorney General also instituted a lawsuit against Los Angeles Unified School District(LAUSD), The People ex rel. George Deukmejian which alleged that excessive violence in schools deprived students of their constitutional right of safety. During the legal process of this case Proposition 8 was passed. Though the Superior Court of Los Angeles County sustained the defendent's (LAUSD) demurrer and the case was eventually filed in the Superior Court of California which denied the plaintiff's petition for a hearing, this legal action heightened public sentiment and support for student rights to safe schools.

This sentiment was shared by Senator Paul Gann, who spearheaded Proposition 8, known as the "Victims' Bill of Rights," in 1982. The safe schools provision states, "All students and staff of public primary, elementary, junior and senior high schools have the inalienable right to attend campuses which are safe, secure and peaceful. (California Constitution Article I, Sect. 28(c))." This bill was passed by 56 percent of the California voters in the June 1982 election.

The research published in the 1978 NIE study was further used to develop policy by the California State legislature. In 1985 Assembly Bil2483 was passed. This legislation mandated school crime reporting. Both the NIE 1978 study and the subsequent study reported by the Boston Safe Schools Commission indicated that principals did not report a majority of violent crime and vandalism

acts. The NIE study indicated that only one-sixth of violent offenses were reported by principals to police (NIE, 1978, p. 4). In the Boston study 30 percent of the students did not report crimes to the principal because they felt nothing would happen (Fox, 1983). As forceful proponents for safe schools, the people of California created legislation to require principals to report any criminal incident--a misdemeanor or felony-- to the police.

On June 1, 1984, directed by President Ronald Reagan, U. S. Department of Justice collaborated with the U. S. Department of Education and Pepperdine University to sponsor the National School Safety Center (NSSC). According to President Reagan, "This center will coalesce public, private and academic resources throughout America to provide a national headquarters to assist educators, law enforcers and the public in restoring our schools as safe, secure and tranquil temples of learning (Reagan, 1984)."

NSSC collects resources, disseminates that information and develops educational programs to promote safe schools. Center staff includes experts in public relations, law enforcement, the legal system and education. Pertinent issues findings are published as legal briefs, news articles, books and School Safety, a quarterly journal which is mailed without charge to 55,000 schools, administrators, police chiefs, legislators, judges and media representatives.

The NSSC staff have developed many educational programs. The first course "Safe Policy" developed was for police chiefs and sheriffs, followed by courses for mid-level managers in the police department. The latest course called "Safe Policy II" is targeted for district teams which must include the school superintendent, the chief prosecutor, police chief, and head of probation department in a given locality. The excitement of this most recent curriculum stems from the communication that occurs when these individuals representing the heads of the four major agencies focused on violence and vandalism in the schools meet under the guidance of a team of trained facilitators.

NSSC has presented information and workshops to a wide variety of professional associations cutting across the fields of education, juvenile justice, health/welfare and law (Scrimger, 1987). Audiences include such groups as National School Board Association, International Association of Police Chiefs, National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, Association of California School Administrators, Attorneys General meetings, National Sheriffs Association, National School Security Directors and International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators. Themes of the presentations include building self-esteem in students, violence and vandalism, Character education, and drug abuse prevention. One of the most popular programs is DARE, a program focused on helping teach youth to say no to drugs. It is being used by school districts throughout the fifty states but Los Angeles Unified School District is its major proponent.

Though NSSC is the major national force in school safety, the National Alliance for Safe Schools also researches school safety issues. Dr. Bob Rubel, the Alliance's director, was a fellow for Office of Juvenile Justice in 1973 and has been active on research in school safety since that period (Rubel, 1987). He was the major researcher for The Unruly School, describing violence in the schools from 1950-1975, and active in the hearings that led to the Congressional mandate which was the basis for the NIE study completed in 1978. He secured support from National Institute of Justice, the research branch of the U.S. Department of Justice, to create the Safer Schools Program, which has been field-tested in three waves in several sites throughout the country. This is a top-down program directed in four phases. In Phase I the locality is requested to perform a safety audit on policies and practices. The Alliance created a self-audit instrument which must be completed by the schools, the U.S. Department of Justice, police, the courts and corrections. Phase II is the period for the Alliance to collect and analyze the data. Phase III includes intensive inservice. During this inservice, all the groups who participated in the self-audit are presented interpretation of the analyzed data and strategies to reduce crime and vandalism are created. The Alliance works to develop ten member planning teams for each site. Phase IV is a session involving the superintendent of

schools, police chief, department of justice and health and human services so that the efforts of each group are coordinated.

Since this approach is top-down, the National Alliance for Safe Schools must maintain the support of upper administration of the schools. Of the three cities involved in the first wave of the program, only one is continuing the efforts of the Alliance. The leadership in the other two sites changed and new leadership was not supportive of this activitiy, a part of the previous administration. During the second wave, the leadership has been maintained and the program is expanding within that locality. The third wave has just begun.

Summary

This description of the research, development of state laws and the origins of practices attempting to restore safe schools suggests that there was a relationship of research to policy to practice. This review also indicates that there is a connection between practice and research. Observations that schools were not as safe as educators and public desired led to allocation by Congress of monies to study the problem. The concern about violence and vandalism in the schools was a problem shared by many and led to 1978 NIE Safe Schools Study as well as studies in Boston, Chicago, Hawaii and Louisiana (Rapp, 1986). The findings of these studies suggested which policies and practices could be developed.

At present, Caliornia is the forerunner in establishing victims' rights and mandating principals to report all misdeamenaors and felonies that occur on their campuses. NSSC also provides resources for legislators in other states who are interested in similar legislation.

Programs educating members of various agencies are now reaching the intended audiences. Although the number of "experts" who possess an interdisciplinary knowledge is small, practices in safe schools are growing and gaining acceptance. Continued support for sustained growth and further expansion is vital.

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